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ABSTRACT

The book presents sketches of paraprofessionals who work in the field of special education with handicapped children in various schools around the country. The functions and value of these paraprofessionals are described, along with brief case profiles. (DLS)

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The VITAL LINK

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Paraprofessionals and the Education of Handicapped Children

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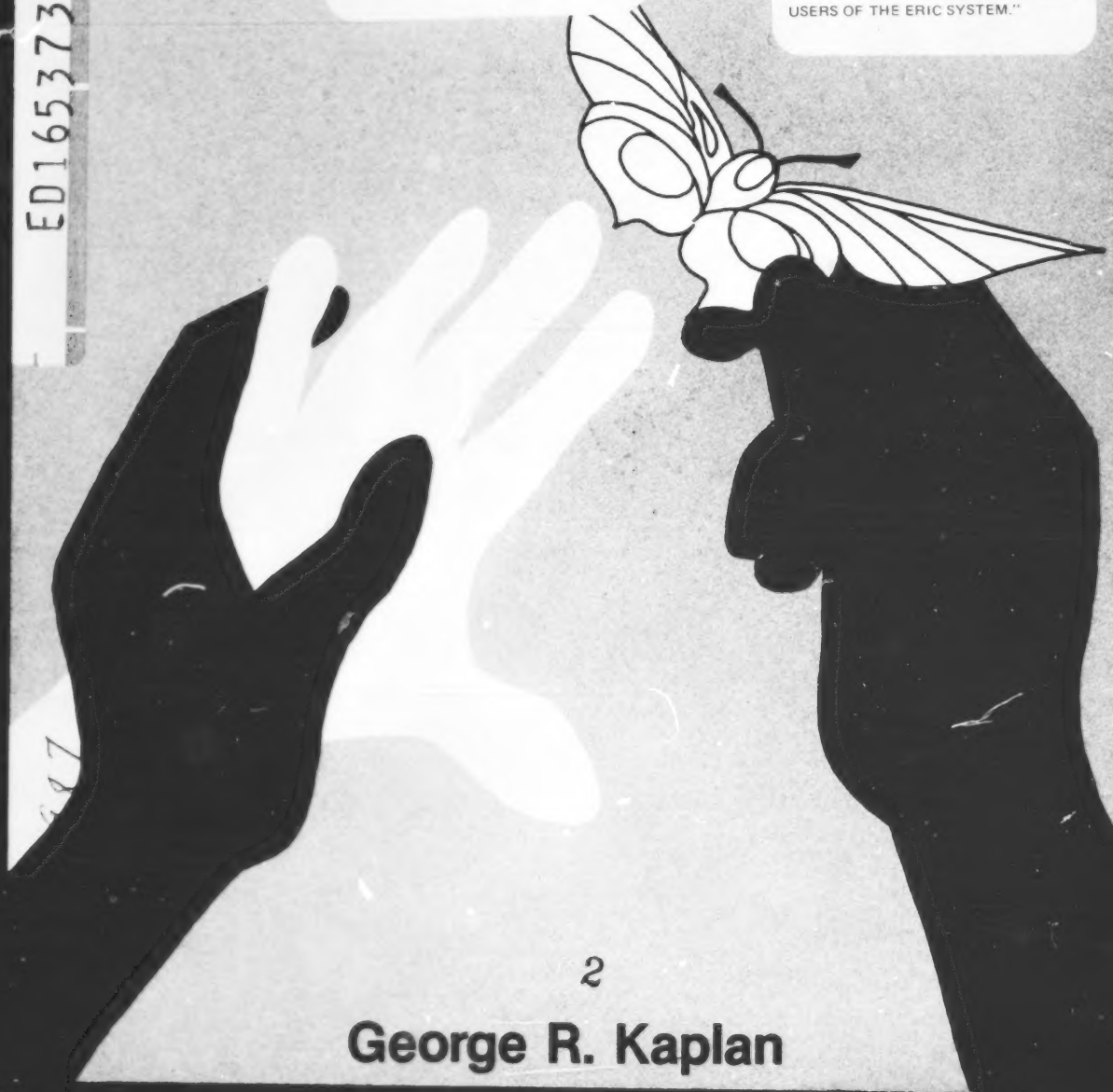

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George R. Kaplan

The Vital Link: Paraprofessionals and the Education of Handicapped Children

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New Careers Training Laboratory
Center for Advanced Study in Education
Graduate School and University Center
City University of New York

EC112997

CASE # 28-78

INTRODUCTION

The necessary expansion of educational opportunities for all handicapped children requires many changes in our attitudes, in both the programs and facilities of the schools, and in their staffing. A crucial element in expanded and improved educational opportunities for handicapped children is the effective utilization of paraprofessionals in classrooms, resource rooms, the community, and the home.

This report on effective use of paraprofessionals was undertaken with the support of Bob Herman, Associate Deputy Commissioner, Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped, USOE, who illustrates how one can combine deep commitment to handicapped children with effective bureaucratic skills to make things happen. We are appreciative of his response to our proposal, as well for the gentle guidance of Doris Gamser and the helpful assistance of Edward Moore.

George Kaplan has once again been able to scout around the country and capture the "best" of paraprofessional practice with his keen eye and sharp pen. Anna Lou Pickett was most helpful in sharing her vast knowledge about paraprofessional activities, both at the national level and in the local communities. In his first busy weeks as Chancellor of the New York City Schools, Frank J. Macchiarola was kind enough to arrange for us to "borrow" his two student photographers, Samuel James and Carl Sulit, and to have Carol Brownell and Charles Schonhaut assist us in arranging for the picture taking. Susan Podbielski fitted the editing in to her already full schedule and Renelda Higgins took on the design and layout with great verve.

Most of all, we are grateful for the willingness of the paraprofessionals and their coworkers to allow us to see their programs and to discuss their activities. We hope this report encourages others to emulate their excellence.

Alan Gartner
Project Director

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TERMS AND TERRAINS: THE SCOPE OF A MOVEMENT

A small, squinting boy, seven or eight, half walks and half lurches to a woman standing in the middle of a room crammed with the gear of physical therapy. He reaches her and, as she gives him a congratulatory hug, she asks him his name. He responds with something that sounds like "Boo." "Good, Bill," she says. "Would you go back and get me your books?" He falls but gets up by holding onto a gym horse with a nearly useless arm. The performance, or a near duplicate of it, has taken place five times that day. This is Bill's third year of learning from a patient teacher's aide named Carmelita. Bill is not seven or eight; he is 14, and the school he attends calls him severely and profoundly handicapped. His friend and mentor, the most important person in his difficult life, is a paraprofessional aide.

In a different part of the country on the same day, Sharon, a seventh-grader in a Girl Scout uniform, taps a wall with a cane, turns and finds a door knob exactly where she knew it would be. A woman in her mid-twenties guides her to a classroom chair, hands her a set of earphones and a large book with raised letters, and deftly leads her into a lesson in speaking. Blind and nearly deaf, Sharon has very limited speech, a soaring intellect, and a woman friend named Mrs. Jefferson who thinks that Sharon will one day go to Harvard or Stanford.

It is 10:30 A.M., and the second grade is returning from recess to begin its daily arithmetic class. As they reenter the classroom, ten-year-old Juan, almost a head taller than most of his classmates, joins the flow and silently occupies a desk near the rear of the room. Once the class has begun, John's guide, Frank, enters quietly and stands, unnoticed, just inside the rear door. This is Juan's fifth day of "mainstreaming," or being phased into a "least restrictive educational environment," and he's beginning to show signs of belonging. Although Juan has been tentatively classified as "educable mentally retarded" by another school system, Frank believes that Juan could be in the fifth grade (the level of his age group) within three months. He intends to see that Juan, the seventh child of migrant workers, makes it.

These are three of America's eight million handicapped children and the people who spend their working days helping to educate them. Not all of the eight million are served, or served properly, by American education—or by most of the other sectors of the human services. Fortunately, the spotlight has fallen on the social and educational neglect that has been the fate of many, and a nation's reawakened conscience has triggered lasting positive change. Most notable has been the response of the United States Congress. In sweeping, though long-overdue, legislation, it has affirmed the right of all handicapped children to a free and appropriate education in the "least restrictive environment." In its goals, scope, and implementation, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142, passed on November 29, 1975) is the American Magna Carta for the people it liberates. No less impressive are the state laws. With few exceptions, they have faced the challenge of the disabled child and responded in the 1970s with laws and administrative commitments that would have been unimaginable a decade earlier.

But laws and the popular will which generates them do not educate handicapped children. People do. With the imposing arrival of P.L. 94-142 and its accompanying combination of enlightenment and enforcement, American education faces huge new responsibilities. Central to all of them is the matter of humanpower. If services to the disabled child are to increase in number and quantity—and rapidly, who will provide them? In new and different ways, teachers will but they will need help as never before. They will be accountable to parents, to administrators, and above all to handicapped

children themselves. They will, in short, have much more to do.

The provisions of the new laws are intricate. One example is the *Individualized Education Program*, a controversial yet necessary cornerstone of the federal law. Grossly oversimplified (for it is destined to become a tough prescriptive design at the center of all special education), the IEP is based on these premises:

- Each child must have an educational blueprint tailored to achieve his/her maximum potential.
- Everyone involved in the child's educational environment, including the child, should have the opportunity to contribute to the development of his/her individual program.
- Individualization means specifics, timetables for those specifics, and their periodic review —all of which produces greatly enhanced fiscal and educational accountability.

The IEP may even signal a revolution in classroom instruction in nearly all of American education, not just for handicapped students but for all kinds of students. This may take place, not this year or next, but possibly in the remaining generation left in the twentieth century. For the Individualized Education Program, a distinct product of the experience gained in serving handicapped children, is as American as any part of our system. It diagnoses the child's learning needs, prescribes educational routes, and ultimately, yields a child whose personal strengths have become the centerpiece of his/her formal education. It does not hammer the student into a pre-formed mold. It centers on individual strengths and needs.

Laboring under various titles, Carmelita, Mrs. Jefferson, and Frank are educational paraprofessionals—members of education's least known, most undervalued, and second most needed field. They are an American cross-section. Some are 18, some 65. Few belong to country clubs, but none (well, possibly a few) are on welfare, even though their wages are often very low—below the welfare levels of some states. Most are women, but more men are on the way. They are otherwise unclassifiable. There is no common definition of their role. They work in schools, but they're found also in state institutions, foster homes, churches, halfway houses, rehabilitation centers, and others too numerous to tally.

The proper, or at least popular, image of the paraprofessional in American education is that of an aide to the classroom teacher. This aide, according to the conventional wisdom, frees the teacher of onerous clerical, menial, and other noninstructional duties. Unencumbered, the teacher can then devote genuinely productive professional time to teaching, planning, and exercising responsibility for the learning of children. The paraprofessional, on the other hand, has claimed reasonably dignified employ-

ment while performing indisputably needed services.

While this is not an entirely accurate picture—the fact is that aides usually perform instructional duties and, in good systems, constitute teaching teams—it is not overly distorted. This view overlooks under-appreciated features of paraprofessionalism such as the advantages in hiring community residents or providing new or refurbished careers for persons consigned to personal dead-end alleys. But it does recognize an emerging field that may offer partial solutions to some of the nation's more chronic social and economic ills. Indeed, there is no sector within the terrain of the human services—whether law, social rehabilitation, gerontology, health, education, or countless others—in which the intelligent application of the skills of the paraprofessional does not benefit every individual or institution in the process. This is especially true in "the other America," where poor people live and, when circumstances allow, work.

There is another group which spans the separations of geography and economics: the world of handicapped children. They come in all sizes, shapes, and disabling conditions. Some cannot see. Others cannot move. Many are unable to cope emotionally with the simplest personal problems or human relationships. Hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, are not up to regular school work while countless others will never hear or utter a word. Many thousands have been victimized by cruel combinations of these and other equally debilitating conditions. There is only infrequent sufficient care and education for these Americans who have suffered biological or physical accidents, inhospitable environments, or, as some jargon-shackled educators might put it, "uncontrollable intervention." Some, like their non-handicapped peers, will eventually attain most of their potential as university professors, taxi drivers, or factory workers; too many others will languish intellectually undernourished and all but ignored, on or beyond the fringes of mainstream America.

The paraprofessional aide is part of the solution. A relatively new addition to the school system, the aide has rapidly gained stature as a key component of a school's instructional team; as a vital link among school, community, and child; and as the person often most able to effectively reach the disabled child. As the special education teacher's responsibility increases by huge leaps, the need for additional qualified, even credentialled, assistance in the classroom and beyond looms as one of the field's most urgent imperatives.

AIDES, CHILDREN, AND SETTINGS

Some paraprofessional people:

* Marcia Atkins is a recent graduate of the Human Services/Mental Health Technology Program of Floyd Junior College in Rome, Georgia and a parent worker at the Evaluation and Service Center in Cedartown which provides psychological and educational services for severely emotionally or behaviorally disturbed children through the age of 14. Serving as the initial contact with parents whose children are at the Center, Marcia interviews, consults, counsels, reports, maintains contact with parents, and acts as part of a team that decides on class placement for the children.

* Sally Cebuhar, an effervescent 24-year-old graduate of Eastern Montana College, is an aide in the Garfield School in Billings, Montana, where she works with 28 post-adolescent (ages 16-21) youths classified as "trainable mentally retarded." An accomplished athlete and coach, Cebuhar steered a team of her students to first place in the state's special olympics. In addition, she has organized and coaches a basketball team, and is negotiating to create a bowling team. She describes her students as "a generally happy group" who appreciate what she tries to do with them.

* Betty Ott is an itinerant aide in the Seaman Independent School District in Kansas and a mother of three. Betty works one-to-one with 12 children with mild learning disabilities in two of the District's four elementary schools and takes her instruction from eight different teachers. The children are taught regular classes by Ott, who "can't imaging doing anything else."

* Lorraine Smiley, a 16-year paraprofessional at the Kansas Neurological Institute in Topeka, teaches classes (by herself) in a variety of subjects and competency levels. Experienced in special education for the severely and profoundly handicapped, she has a two-year degree, the respect of her students and peers, and a twelve month annual income close to that of a fully credentialed teacher.

This cross-section only hints at the diversity of categories, backgrounds, and styles to be found among the nation's paraprofessionals. Even the statistics are incomplete. A careful analysis of responses to a national survey seeking to tally gross figures on instructional aides in 1976-77 estimated a total of 46,000. That averages approximately three instructional aides per school district, a number that may represent only 20 to 25 percent of the actual total and does not account for countless thousands of others who work in institutions, foster homes, and various other care and therapeutic facilities as aides or their close equivalents. It is not unrealistic to consider 250,000 as a reasonable estimate of all the salaried aides in special education in mid-1978, and this figure can only rise in the decade ahead.

Scattered throughout the nation are school systems that still consider the aide to be a glorified hall monitor, recess disciplinarian, or supply clerk. They are becoming an ever-decreasing minority as the systems are forced (many willingly) to recognize the shifts that are occurring, especially in the role of the teacher.

With the teacher now expected to be both instructor and educational manager/planner, the organization of learning in the special education classroom has become intricate and complex. The teacher of handicapped children who doesn't want to share this work with a competent aide may no longer exist—few teachers are jealous of or feel threatened by a paraprofessional. If the doctrines of separation of powers

Samuel James

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and respect for the rights of others apply anywhere, surely the relationship between teacher and aide in special education is near the top of the list.

What does the aide do? What makes this person the unsung hero(ine) of special education? An on-the-scene survey by the New Careers Training Laboratory of the City University of New York of 67 aides (64 women and three men) in 41 classrooms in California, Florida, Georgia, Minnesota, New York, and Oregon revealed that paraprofessionals were involved most extensively in activities which enrich individualized instruction to handicapped children, such as helping students individually or in small groups with their school work, using special materials in small groups, and assisting teachers with instruction. These observations of paraprofessionals were made mainly "in classes for the trainable mentally retarded, orthopedically handicapped, and multiply handicapped where paraprofessionals helped children with tasks such as toileting, grooming, or dressing...preparing the classroom, operating equipment, or aiding the teacher with clerical duties." But, the study went on, "with the exception of preparing the room for the teacher and children, paraprofessionals are not used extensively in these activities." The sample is small, but it is compatible with all other recent available evidence.

The table on the right provides an accurate representation of the main kinds of work paraprofessionals do.

With or without state laws and Public Law 94-142, the paraprofessional in special education has been a key force in improving the quality of educational services which the handicapped child receives. Superintendent Leonard Lavis of the Kansas Neurological Institute asserts that, without its paraprofessionals, the institution, which has 450 residents, would have to "close up shop and go home." As Education Director Deborah Maxon says, "They make the difference in the progress of these [severely and profoundly handicapped] children. It's a case of maintenance and survival versus learning, and the aides at KNI make the difference." This is as true of other schools as it is of Kansas Neurological Institute.

Percentage of Paraprofessionals Observed Working in Facilities for Handicapped Children by Type of Activity*

	Percentage of paraprofessionals engaged in each activity
Instruction	
Helping children individually with school work	91
Helping small groups of children with school work	82
Assisting teachers with instruction	70
Working in small groups with special materials	70
Reading to or playing games with children	67
Initiating and carrying out lessons in the classroom	55
Physical care	
Supervising in lavatories, on bus rides, in play yard, and during recess	61
Assisting children with health needs	47
Transporting children from room to room	46
Helping children with grooming or dressing	34
Daily classroom routine	
Preparing and arranging the room for teacher and children	56
Supervising class when teacher leaves the room	34
Assisting in bulletin board materials and art	28
Clerical duties (attendance records, correcting of papers, and so forth)	14

*Many paraprofessionals were involved in more than one activity.

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THE AIDE AT WORK

There is no disability too serious, and no child too handicapped for the paraprofessional to deal with. There may be surface similarities among the aides and the children they work with and for, but resemblances are tricky. If it is the beginning of wisdom to understand that no two humans are really identical, then the paraprofessional who helps handicapped children is surely on the way to being wise.

Ask the instructional aide about personal motivation, and the answer usually comes out about the same: "I love people, especially young ones and, most particularly, those who need me most." There is little complexity here; whether graduate degree-holder or stock clerk turned educator, the paraprofessional wants to help handicapped children. The teacher of handicapped children is similarly driven. This combination is irresistible and effective. Alike in motivation but as different as the children in their classroom, teacher and aide are both symbiotic and synergistic. They draw from one another, as they strengthen and improve what they do.

The people and places in the following sketches represent only the tiniest sample of a national cross-section, for there is no way to encapsulate the ties that so closely bind teacher, aide, child, and the assorted forces and influences that bear on the handicapped child's development. They do attempt, though, to capture the mood, commitment, and diversity that characterize the paraprofessional field.

Samuel James

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"WE'D PERISH WITHOUT THEM"

A good paraprofessional could carry a program in a school for severely and profoundly handicapped children along with a good therapist. We're proud of the aides we have here; we only wish that there could be a way for them to get special consideration. They really have a tough job.

Waetina Coles
Principal, William S. Baer School
Baltimore, Maryland

The William S. Baer School in Baltimore opened its doors to the city's handicapped children in 1933. With its extra-wide corridors, ramps, special toilet facilities, and uniquely designed therapeutic rooms, it was, in the Depression-era, a model site at which to educate children with disabling conditions—and often diabolical combinations of them—spanning virtually the entire spectrum of handicaps. The children do not live at the school; of Baer's 250 students, ranging in age from four to 21, about 175 live with their families or in foster homes, while 75 are transported daily from nearby residential facilities. Their handicaps are nearly crushing, yet the Baer school is not a depressing place; it is often a happy one.

The thought of managing Baer's educational and training programs without paraprofessionals is anathema to Principal Waetina Coles. Paraprofessionals are at the core of every facet of the school's operation. They are both ubiquitous and necessary and make teaching and learning possible. Without the paraprofessionals, personalized instruction could not exist. "Without them, we'd perish," says Principal Coles.

Although terminology and stratification pervade the personnel classification systems of all large public school systems—and Baltimore is no exception—it is not difficult to isolate the paraprofessionals. Some are called educational assistants, most are exceptional children's aides, a few are occupational therapy aides, and scattered others have such labels as home visitors or community-parent liaison workers.

Numerically, Baer's teachers and paraprofessionals run a nearly dead heat. There are 56 teachers and, depending on how the titles group themselves in a given week, 55 regular paraprofessionals. Supplementing this is a floating assortment of specialists, part-timers, and students from nearby Coppin State and Dundalk Community Colleges who are undergoing their on-site practica. All, in the words of Baer's *Staff Handbook*, "...are important to the overall program because of the tremendous assistance they offer in carrying on the school's program of instruction and socialization." The characterization is descriptive but understated and incomplete, as Principal Coles demonstrates with these examples:

- With a corps of dedicated paraprofessionals centering prodigious efforts on one-to-one physical or "coping" therapy (and heavy but unquantifiable doses of sympathetic caring under the direction of a gifted faculty), the Baer staff has managed every year to increase the number of children able to function adequately in its "regular" classroom settings. As they acquire better skills—often as basic as toilet training, manipulation of eating utensils, or improved mobility—more have also taken their daily places in the school's cafeteria, a move of incalculable social importance to children once consigned to loneliness and immobility.
- Although not technically instructed by the city to do so, the school's administration strives to involve its students in such mainstream-type activities as scouting, student government, wheelchair athletics, swimming,

and creative arts. Assisted and encouraged by paraprofessionals with special talents and enthusiasms, Baer's children have won numerous awards and, more importantly, are acquiring self-worth that would have been all but denied them in a less hospitable setting with less motivated instructors.

- As the worthwhile but undernourished paraprofessional movement in regular education tries, with uneven results, to gain momentum in Baltimore, as elsewhere, paraprofessionals have proved themselves within the world of Baltimore's handicapped children. Of Baer's 53 paraprofessionals, only six are federally funded; provisions for the rest are in the city's regular budget for special education—an extraordinary situation.

There is no single quality about the role or status of Baer's paraprofessionals that distinguishes them from any other. They work with children who were given exceptionally unfortunate fates (and, in most cases, valiantly refuse to acknowledge it). Working conditions range from fair to poor in an old and indifferently sited facility with few of the amenities that accompanied the post-World War II surge of school building. There is no career ladder or lattice (lateral career movement with upward possibilities) and no early prospect of either. And to say the least, the aides' salary levels, in one of the nation's major urban school systems, need drastic upward revision. Waetina Coles would like, at the least, to rotate the aides into different jobs every two years to limit possible staleness and frustration.

"IT'S DOING SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE"

At first sight, the 149-year-old Perkins School for the Blind resembles one of the venerable high-quality liberal arts colleges that dot the map of New England. Hoary with tradition, it is the Rolls Royce of special education with a roster of corporation officers that is liberally sprinkled with Lowell's, Hallowells, Saltonstalls, Cushmans, and of course, Cabots. It costs $12,000 a year for a child to attend Perkins's aging facilities which are the envy of the public schools. Its catalogues and descriptive materials compare with those of most American colleges.

Flip the record and listen to the other side. Enrollment dropped 15 percent in each of the two most recent school years as the public schools began to respond to the state's tough new legislation (Chapter 766) and draw handicapped children away from special schools like Perkins. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts pays many of the bills; in fact, most of Perkins's students are referred by the state. Once a combination vocational-college preparatory school with students often moving on to secure jobs or attend the best colleges in America, it now, according to its descriptive materials, "sets out to educate each pupil in the way his parents and community would wish." Even its name is no longer accurate, for most of Perkins's students have multiple handicaps, of which blindness may not be the most serious. All, however, must be mobile, a condition that slightly eases the work for Perkins's teachers, aides, and child care workers, who in other places may be called cottage or developmental parents.

After 149 years, Perkins has acquired a distinctive life style and set of educational values. Everything and everyone have their proper places in the school's well-oiled operation. The 15 instructional paraprofessionals are divided into two categories, assistant teachers and teacher's aides, although there is little practical differentiation, except in salary, between them.

Part of Perkins's style is an easy familiarity among teachers, paraprofessionals, and children. While traditional roles are respected, Perkins offers more child-adult contact than all but the most exceptional public schools, and the aide is a pivotally important part: negotiator, friend, instructor, role model, and disciplinarian. In most of Perkins's classroom settings there is a teacher and an aide for every three children. The resultant relationships may be unique in special education.

Roberta Braga is an assistant teacher with a two-year associate's degree in "child care technology." When she arrived at Perkins as a child care worker before switching to classroom work, she was handed one of the more difficult children in the school—a seven-year-old deaf-blind boy from Pennsylvania who refused to learn to communicate. After a month Roberta was bruised, scratched, and had taken a hard kick in the mouth. Determined to succeed, she took a crash course in sign language and set

We've got all kinds of people working here as child care workers. Some are just passing through, then there are people who just want to help someone, and we have others who are long-time careerists. What all 24 of them share is a genuine desire to do whatever they can for these children.

Mary McDonagh
Supervisor, Child Care Workers
Perkins School for the Blind
Watertown, Massachusetts

about showing the boy how to deal with his anger. It was a long, frequently frustrating journey, but it began to work. Within a few months, the youngster had spent Thanksgiving with Roberta and her family. The relationship lasted three years, with Roberta and the boy visiting each other's homes. The ending, like so many in the education of handicapped children, is not a thoroughly happy one. Although now better equipped to control his frustrations, the boy regressed somewhat upon his return home when Roberta moved on to classroom work.

At 26, Roberta has spent four years in a profession for which she trained and in which she is clearly a superior practitioner, embodying all the attributes of her field—patience, skill, love of children, the ability to deal with her own feelings, and tremendous pride in her work. But she earns less than a beginning clerk in nearby Boston and doesn't see where she is headed. There isn't enough money to pursue a four-year degree, and even if she took that route, teaching jobs in and around Boston are at a premium. She is and wants to remain a paraprofessional, though it looms as a dead-end.

Less concerned about her professional future is Dorothy Dowe, a child care worker in her middle years whose first contact with Perkins came as a legally blind six-year-old student there. Able to read braille and very large print, Dorothy was a factory worker until 1948 when she returned to Perkins to be an "attendant" or, in the language of today's Perkins School, a child care worker. Her job in the Bradley House residence at Perkins is to work with three or four children on some of the basic skills and techniques of living: dressing, buttoning, learning front from rear, washing, brushing teeth (including knowing when to stop squeezing the toothpaste tube), toilet training, playing together, talking, and, in short, learning how to get along. Less obvious is her status as a role model, a product of the institution in which she was educated, who has learned to live with her own handicapping condition while helping others cope with theirs.

More than a generation older than Roberta Braga, whom she knows and respects as a classroom paraprofessional who works effectively with two of "her" children, Dorothy Dowe uses almost exactly the same language as Roberta to describe the attributes of the good paraprofessional: patience, satisfaction with the work, "doing something good for someone," personal stability, and more patience. The difference is that Dorothy is not concerned with the vagaries of the job market and her own drive for self-advancement.

"NONE ARE TOO YOUNG"

No, this isn't the best-looking school in the Pacific Northwest, but it's an important one. Getting at these very young children the way we do can make the decisive difference in their lives. I'm not at all sure, though, that we could do it without the Teacher One group, the ones you call paraprofessionals.

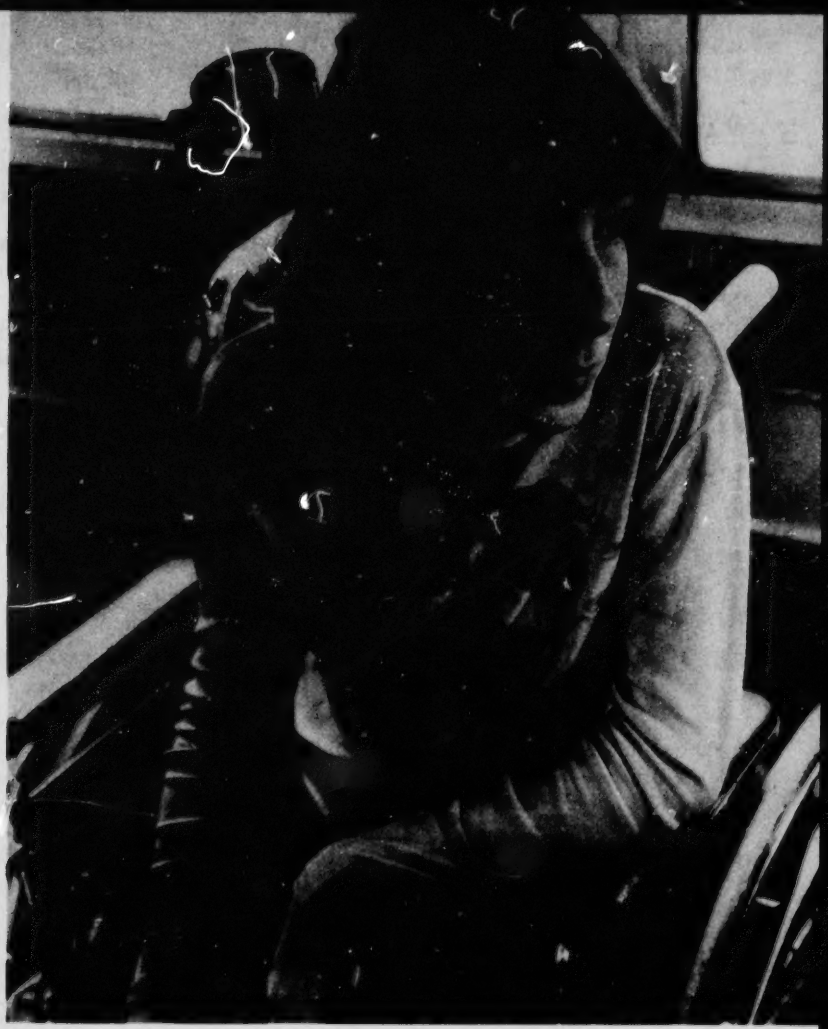
Claire Huyler
Educational Coordinator
Northwest Center for the Retarded
Seattle, Washington

Much of Puget Sound is inspirationally beautiful; a few isolated sectors are not. One of the latter is a small World War II naval base called simply, Pier 91. Hardly a jewel in the U.S. Navy's crown, it is difficult to reach, not built to last, and a poor architectural example. But it may never have known more productive days than now for it houses a veritable smorgasbord of programs for handicapped people. There isn't a military uniform to be seen in what is now the Northwest Center for the Retarded, a complex of programs which serves some 350 retarded children and adults in an average year.

Twenty of the 350 are the responsibility of Claire Huyler and a small instructional staff that includes Kerry Kourkoumellis, Rebecca Hoppis, and Sally Barnes, products of North Seattle Community College's two-year training program for paraprofessionals in special education. The 20 children are among the youngest in all of special education. The oldest is three, and some "students" have ages that are usually mentioned in weeks. Some are severely and profoundly handicapped, while others are "developmentally delayed," a euphemism covering late or non-starters. Their parents, like the Center's administration and most reputable authorities in the field, believe strongly in "the earlier the better" for special attention. It is not easy to leave an infant in a ramshackle wooden building on a poorly maintained second-rate naval base for a seven-hour day five days a week throughout the year. Nor is working there a series of unending joys and triumphs.

For Kerry Kourkoumellis, the Northwest Center is an opportunity that may never again come her way. Whether she returns to college for a bachelor's degree, moves on to other work, or stays at the Center, she feels that her 18 months at Pier 91 have been a personal watershed experience. One reason has been the professional basis of her employment. Despite the Center's shoestring economic existence—support is undependable, with approximately three-fourths coming from federal funds, a traditionally unpredictable source—the Center does not economize on instructional personnel. Like her fellow alumnae of the North Seattle program, Kerry is considered a "Teacher One" (AA degree) in a system that goes through "Teacher Two" (bachelor's or AA degree plus considerable experience) to "Teacher Three" (master teacher level; there was only one at the Center in 1977-78). It is a 12-month job with a minimum salary of $600 per month, medical and dental insurance, and 12 vacation days. Within the "Teacher One" classification, it is possible to reach a monthly wage of $780—not paraprofessional paradise but a respectable amount.

The adult-child ratio at the Northwest Center is small; three students per teacher with frequent visits by occupational and speech therapists, one



Carl Suhl

or more student or "practicum" teachers who are on hand most of the time, out-of-school participants in the Seattle Youth Training Program, and regular infusions of volunteers. The preponderance of adults has not reduced the work load or the professional responsibility that goes with it. Performing work indistinguishable from that of a certified special education teacher has given Kerry and her peers much self-confidence even as she respects their superior, or at least different, qualifications.

There is no aspect of the child's development that does not concern the young "Teachers One." They are seeking responses, working on sensory stimulation, teaching rudimentary "coping" or life skills, and trying to find the children's strengths. One of Kerry's children has begun talking, walking, and even running, before Kerry and the specialists had expected. Labeled "developmentally delayed," the child is showing strong positive signs. Others aren't. The job, in short, has its ups and downs, and Kerry is not immune to them.

What does an aide (or Teacher One) need to know or have? There's no single quality, says Kourkoumellis, but rather a combination: knowledge of children and their disabilities (including, where necessary, very specific ones like cerebral palsy) personal stability, sensitivity to the human condition, and, of course, limitless patience. Equipped with these, Kourkoumellis feels that it's possible "to help every child reach fullest potential in every way."

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"AIDES HELP MAINSTREAMING"

The name of the game is getting these educationally handicapped children into regular classrooms, not as marginal, self-doubting underachievers but as solid members of their peer group, able to meet the demands made on them. That's what our instructional aides are trying to help bring about.

Pollyann O'Brien
San Jose Unified School District
San Jose, California

The Congressional authors of Public Law 94-142 prefer to talk of placing the child in the "least restrictive environment"; others cling to the term "mainstreaming." They mean roughly the same thing: preparing and moving the handicapped child into the setting most likely to spur learning and socialization. The paths to this goal are many and varied. They often exist in combination—teachers, technology, therapy, facilities, movitvation—that defy scientific measurement. Increasingly, the combination includes an instructional aide. Sometimes that aide is the key ingredient in the mix, even though the school system itself may be slow to concede the point.

San Jose, California's fourth most populated city with over a half-million residents, has such a school system. Traditionally dependent on parent volunteers to help the overtaxed special education teachers, San Jose's schools employ few paraprofessionals. Those who are employed may not be credentialed teachers, even though such persons represent an excellent source of paraprofessional strength in times of teacher surplus.

But to someone like Maxine Schell, an aide employed in San Jose, the opportunities for satisfaction and self-fulfillment, if not for financial gain, are enormous. At Erikson Elementary School, Maxine, the mother of three college-age children, is in the business of mainstreaming. In her third year at the school but her ninth as an aide, Maxine literally grooms the children in a special "primary-level" class for movement into regular classrooms. She shares the class with a teacher (who is "one of my best friends" and a potential business partner). There are two such classes at Erikson. Some of the children in hers, which tries to introduce the children gradually into the first three school grades, will make it; others will not.

Maxine Schell experiences a broad span of emotions from quiet satisfaction to almost uncontrollable frustration. Satisfaction comes from working with a boy who was uncommunicative, negative, resistant to school, and, at the age of seven, unable or unwilling to control his bodily functioning. For a year, in the special education equivalent of the first grade, he showed little change. But in his second year signs of progress appeared. "He began to see that he wasn't the worst kid in the class," said Schell. The boy talked more and his school work improved. He started getting along better with his peers. Why? Says Maxine: "We simply worked with him, created a happy atmosphere, and tried to strike a balance between compas-

sion and toughness. He's not all the way out of the woods. But he'll enter third grade next year, and I'm betting on him."

There are others whom the school system wants to prepare for "mainstreaming" but whose prospects are unclear, like those of a nine-year-old girl who seemed to have the potential but couldn't master reading or writing or a six-year-old who had never dressed herself. One day Maxine simply refused to help. The child struggled to put her jacket on and zip it up. Succeeding, after enormous efforts, she then removed it and hung it on a peg. But she still has enormous problems mastering skills, like folding paper. She may one day make it in a regular classroom, but the odds aren't favorable yet.

At Trace School in San Jose, Aide Lucy Lujano Musick, the mother of two children aged 14 and eight, works nearly exclusively on a one-to-one basis with the members of a 12-child class. She drills them, repeats the drills, encourages, tires, revises, becomes frustrated, is sometimes satisfied, and gets a few of them out of special education and into regular classrooms. It is a mixed blessing. Some make it, although not by much, but others return, defeated and needing the strong but consoling touch of an aide even more than the first time around. As always, the operative word is patience. To Lucy Musick an equally important one is desire: by the child, the parents, the paraprofessional. One child who couldn't speak, either English or his native Spanish, responded to pressure and, turtle slow, came around. Two of this year's 12 children were phased gradually into regular classrooms. They had the desire, and Musick was able to work steadily with them on phonics, writing, reading.

Schell and Musick are strong, self-confident persons who are at the heart of the processes of elementary schooling. Even though they may spend more noninstructional time with handicapped children than anyone else in the system —the teacher has lesson plans and IEPs to design and the therapist is a visitor rather than a resident—these aides typify American education's unsung heroes. The San Jose Unified School District puts it all too clearly when it publishes a single salary scale that treats three categories of employees identically: locker room attendant, campus assistant (recess monitor), and instructional aide. Clerical and custodial staff receive appreciably higher wages. Small wonder that Maxine Schell runs a private tutoring service and that Lucy Lujano Musick intends to leave the field at the end of the school year.

"THEY GIVE STIMULATION"

The aide makes an important difference in any special education setting, but nowhere more than in the education of the severely and profoundly handicapped child. Our program makes no bones about it: we want people who want to work with the severely disabled. That's going to be one of the main emphases of the near future and beyond in special education.

Dr. Vincent Chillemi
Dundalk Community College
Dundalk, Maryland

One of the paradoxes of working with severely and profoundly retarded children is that the work can be difficult and often unrewarding for the teachers but stimulating for the aides. Responsible for a whole class and for the growing mountains of plans and reports necessary to design and account for each pupil's education, the teacher must depend increasingly more on the experienced paraprofessional to carry out much of the burden of teaching in one of its purest forms: individualized instruction for children desperately in need of it. And, in the words of Dr. Philip S. Massey, superintendent of Holly Center in Salisbury, Maryland, the aide also gives stimulation:

> Given appropriate activity, the severely retarded can function better. The human organism needs stimulation. Normal people develop alternatives. The severely and profoundly handicapped don't have anything to do. But with stimulation and activity, it is possible to reduce patterns of bizarre behavior. By providing a better ratio of nonretarded helpers to retardees, we can help these patterns from occurring. It may be better to have two aides than one teacher. The psychologist isn't going to keep the retarded child busy, nor is any other specialist. If education for the severely and profoundly handicapped has meaning, it must improve their life in some way, not just educationally. A properly motivated and trained aide can provide the activity. And it's good business; aides can be less expensive and enormously effective. But we must be able to keep them, to create conditions that will persuade them to stay.

The work of an aide with handicapped children is extremely demanding, sometimes even hazardous. At the Firecrest School in King County, Washington, 22-year-old Lynne Burke "teaches" a 15-year-old boy whose responses to her instruction have included scratching, kick-

ing, and pushing heavy desks at her. Defensive, hostile, unwilling to communicate, the boy finally became convinced that Lynne was his friend—or wanted to be. Gradually and skeptically, he reacted to Lynne's good nature and her untiring efforts to draw him out. Working with the teacher, Lynne proudly reports that the young man is turning the corner. He is trying to master the work of his classroom and has begun to ask for more.

Halfway across the country, at the Kansas Neurological Institute (KNI) in Topeka, "school" is going on. Paraprofessional Joann Adkins, who is handicapped herself, sits cradling a child who looks three but is seven and seems to be sleeping but isn't. There are two other children in a room equipped for countless varieties of physical therapy. The teacher, Linda Cooke, is tending to a five-year-old, while a six-year-old sits quietly in a specially fitted wheelchair. All three children wear helmets. They rarely relate to one another. None of the three can walk or talk. One is mostly blind and another is hydrocephalic (oversized head with a buildup of excessive fluid). Two of the students have cerebral palsy and seizures are regular.

The educational style in this section of the Kansas Neurological Institute is, well, different. Only by a leap of imagination could it be called a "school." Yet the leap must be made, for Joann is teaching as surely as Miss Jones in a "normal" fifth grade classroom in Watts or Shaker Heights. Quietly but effectively, she helps the children with head control and intends to try toilet training. She emphasizes that contact stimulates.

Eight of the Kansas Neurological Institute's more promising children are in their special area in the Arthur Capper Education Center in another part of Topeka. The Capper Center houses a training unit for unwed school-age mothers, facilities for trainable and severely mentally handicapped children, headquarters for Topeka's gifted and talented students, and the offices of the school system's speech therapists. It is a busy place with variety, activity, and, for the severely and profoundly handicapped children who learn there, stimulation.

The guiding spirit of the class for severely and profoundly handicapped (SPH) children is Glenna Alderson, a cheery, devoted teacher who refuses to consider the problems of her students to be insurmountable. "All time is learning time," says Alderson, who adds, "but it wouldn't be without the paraprofessionals, Cathy Anderson and Elizabeth Watson." The three are a team, and all are convinced that their charges can receive an education. According to Alderson, two have the potential to become trainable and even attend regular schools, but all must go beyond stimulation to training and education. From 9:30 A.M. to 2:00 P.M., the three women are equals, says Alderson, with decisions and work roughly shared. As Alderson puts it, she is "first among equals," making the out-of-class decisions, and determining the days direction. All three do all aspects of in-class work. Charts kept on each child's drinking, eating, responses, and tantrums show across-the-board improvement for all eight.

On the East Coast, in the Battle Monument School in Baltimore, Aide Elmer Walters works with pre-adolescent children who are severely handicapped. All are mobile, a condition of acceptance to Battle Monument which has 234 students. Most of the students live at home, and many are at their normal school grade level but many suffer from debilitating physical, psychomotor, or psychological ills, and Walters has no illusions about his job. He must change diapers—three to five times a day for some children, including 12-year-olds. He must get the children onto buses, a task that often requires the physical dexterity of the handler of fine art objects. Above all, he must keep his charges alert, interested, and participating. To Walters, commitment and realistic expectation about the job form a necessary combination with the patience and personal stability that his peers believe to be the requisites of a successful paraprofessional. Walter's own plans are to finish the graduate degree he is chasing and become a full-fledged teacher of handicapped children.

The four paraprofessionals mentioned here differ in age, education, geographic region, and salary level. But they do have some common characteristics. For one, even the top wage is insultingly low. For another, they enjoy approximately as much job security as a coach in the National Football League (very little). For still another, they are indispensible. And, of course, they are working day in and day out with children who are emotionally the neediest and yet toughest to help in the country.

"WE KEEP FINDING THEM"

They're everywhere and nowhere. For every handicapped child our paraprofessionals locate in a backwoods shack, there just may be five more. We may never know how many—what with super-protective parents and a prevalence of barbed-wire fences and shotguns—but we'll keep trying.

Olna Montgomery
Director, Project SEARCH
Hays-Blanco Special Education Cooperative
Kyle, Texas

Samuel James

The premise of Hays-Blanco's paraprofessionals is indisputable: that every handicapped child in their four-school district area should receive the education that state and federal laws mandate. Their "collective," a small unit of the equally small Hays-Blanco Special Education Cooperative is called Securing Educational Alternatives, Rehabilitation, and Counseling for the Handicapped (or Project SEARCH). Search is what the six paraprofessional women of Project SEARCH spend their waking hours doing in a quest which is endless, although they refuse to acknowledge it.

The Hays-Blanco jurisdiction is one of five temporary organizations in Texas created to locate children with handicaps who are not presently in school. In an area of 1,800 square miles, the SEARCH project covers the rural school districts of Hays (2,000 school children), Dripping Springs (1,000), Johnson City (475), and Blanco (500). With its population of old "Anglo" settlers, Mexican-Americans (many in the area for several generations), and more recent Mexican immigrants, thinly dispersed over a huge area of ranches and farmland reaching almost from Austin to the Mexican border, SEARCH needs people who literally know its every square foot. For tucked away along dry creeks or dirt roads branching off from other dirt roads are the dwelling places of children whom ignorance and prejudice have consigned to empty, self-pitying lives. Finding them is not a job for bureaucrats, teachers, or social workers; it is a job for people who live in the area, who are part of it, and who somehow inspire trust.

The "success" stories of Project SEARCH would barely fill a five-foot shelf. They are relatively few (101 in the project's first year), although each has come hard, and no two are alike. Few could have occurred without the project's paraprofessionals, a caring, qualified team of motivated women. All subscribe totally to the "zero reject" principle embodied in the project (and in Texas law): that no child, regardless of handicap, will be denied special education services. They also subscribe to the notion that no tactic should be ignored if it finds a needy handicapped child. Like detective story heroes, they seem to care little about work schedules, will use any "source," and will tear about the countryside with little apparent regard for their own safety.

Rosa Lee Castillo of Kyle (population 1,629), where the project is berthed, has experienced both highs and lows in her work with Project SEARCH. A 29-year-old mother of two boys whose husband is a Job Corps instructor in San Marcos, Rosa Lee is a high school graduate whose job training consisted of a week-long orientation on exceptionality at nearby Southwest Texas State University in San Marcus (which boasts Lyndon Baines Johnson as its most famous alumnus), monthly workshops,

and a one-week "familiarization tour" of the Project's vast terrain. Her job like that of her peers is a three-phase cycle: finding the child and performing the necessary clerical chores; locating appropriate services, often medical or therapeutic as well as educational; and making certain that instruction reaches the child.

Sometimes, only the first part of the first phase happens. Rosa Lee once located five-year-old twins who, among other disabilities, couldn't talk. Her efforts to persuade their mother to let them attend kindergarten were unavailing; the mother couldn't be bothered to buy clothes for them or to encourage the twins' pregnant 16-year-old sister to do anything about her schooling. Rosa Lee also found a teachable 19-year-old boy who had never been in school and could not talk. But his parents refused to allow him into rehabilitation sessions, and SEARCH could not press the issue.

But sometimes the whole cycle occurs, as in the case of a multiply handicapped four-year-old boy who was referred to SEARCH by neighbors. Told that the boy had little time to live because of a weak heart (he also had a badly cleft palate, was crippled, and nearly deaf), his parents had given up hope. A year later, he had had several successful heart operations, three more on the palate, and was enrolled in a special education class in Kyle. An alert and curious youngster, he has begun to mix with his peers and may yet have a successful education and useful life.

Pat Gable, who covers Lake Travis and Dripping Springs, where the senior citizen members of the Rinky Dink Domino Club have informally helped locate children, wasn't looking for a job when Project SEARCH began recruiting in 1975. But she had an interest in special education and knew everyone in the area. She also has respect for large dogs who guard isolated dwellings and, like her colleagues, knows how to enlist the unpaid, unofficial services of sheriffs, butane gas delivery men (a great source of information; everyone in South Texas uses butane), storekeepers, postal clerks, ministers, and other members of what former SEARCH Director Mary Hewitt calls an informal but effective intelligence network.

When the welfare authorities told Pat of a four-year-old girl who was tied with a rope to the side of her house, Pat attempted to get through to the family. She learned that the child's unwed mother had been raped and spent five years in an institution. The child's grandparents (a label Pat believes may not be entirely accurate) claimed that she had been tied to avoid falling off a bluff into a lake. Pat managed to get the child diagnosed. The findings: a speech problem, tremor in the limbs, and social deprivation (a withdrawn child). Although she could talk, the child could not interact with other children. Despite tremendous skepticism from the child's family, Pat enrolled the little girl in an early childhood class in March, 1976. Within two years she had reached

the first grade.

In Johnson City, once a tourist mecca but now a drowsy Southern Texas town of 1,000 people, long-time resident Mabel Burleson writes an occasional column for the weekly newspaper, helps out in the town's three schools, and finds children who need special education. The wife of Johnson City's former sheriff and active in clubs, Mabel is not a garden variety teacher's aide, although she had several years' experience as one. She is, rather, a wise, exceptionally well-connected woman who knows and wants to serve handicapped children. Her intelligence network is the several communities she serves. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. For every child who turns out to be a bright-eyed poster child for muscular dystrophy, there is another like the boy found by deerhunters. They said he was "a funny-looking kid" living in a shack about 30 miles from Johnson City somewhere near Little Congress Creek in Blanco County between Devil's Backbone and Blanco. Mabel can't find him yet, but vows she will. And if he is handicapped in any way, she will find help for him.

In Berda, near the home of Paraprofessional Pat Odell, there are roughly 500 people. Most are Mexican-American, and a few are Black. While canvassing house-to-house, Pat found the residents of one house to be uncommunicative, although their next-door neighbors were sure they had a handicapped child. They were right. Pat found a two-year-old who couldn't talk and whose parents were defensive about it. But two-year-olds aren't eligible for state or federally-supported special education. Pat waited, until the child's third birthday when SEARCH underwrote a battery of medical tests that revealed speech problems and "social deprivation." The child entered an early childhood class in Berda and began to speak shortly thereafter. Pat checks regularly on the child.

The Hays-Blanco area reeks of authentic Americana, Texas style. Gillespie Baker of the Hays-Blanco Special Education Cooperative calls it "a great place to work if you care about handicapped children." But it is also a place of startling educational contradiction. This land of gently rolling hills, wild turkeys, armadillos, and places like Driftwood, Onion Creek, and Dripping Springs, defeats school bond issues while creating something beautiful like Project SEARCH. Throughout its brief life—the possible expiration of federal funding in 1978 may signal its demise—Project SEARCH has done many good things. Beyond the children it found and the paraprofessionals it employed, it helped to create a genuine consciousness and much knowledge about handicapped children in places that hadn't known much about them. Maybe that's enough.

"DEAFNESS IS A GLASS CAGE"

In the beginning, most of the students who entered the program for interpreters were people who already had some experience. For the past two or three years, we've found a need to offer sign language classes to interested but inexperienced students. Now the field is taking off.

Theresa Smith
Coordinator, Interpreter Training Program
Seattle Central Community College
Seattle, Washington

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In a class on woodworking at Wilson Middle School in Seattle, Washington, an instructor explains planing and squaring to 25 students who are sitting in various adolescent poses on and near workbenches. The teacher is witty and provocative, and encourages questions which come rapidly. The first is from a boy who has clearly understood the teacher but wonders aloud if there aren't other ways to approach the same task. He receives a satisfactory answer, and the class continues.

The boy is deaf. He and a nearby female student are receiving the lecture from an Ameslan (American Sign Language) interpreter who is seated inconspicously, with her back to the teacher, between two benches. Both chil[illegible]n and 35 other deaf students at Wilso[illegible] in regular, "contact" classes, all with [illegible]preters like Lynn Terwilleger and Sue S[illegible]s in the room for at least part of the cla[illegible]hour. Before Lynn burst on the Wilson scene in January 1977, only three or four of the school's deaf children were in "contact" classes; the rest were in self-contained classes for the deaf. With interpreters to "put the door in the glass cage of deafness," the ratio is reversing itself and deaf children are "in." Signing, in fact, has become so popular at Wilson that the interpreters conduct classes for hearing children who want to communicate better with their deaf chums.

When 22-year-old Lynn Terwilleger, a former dining shift manager of a McDonald's fast food establishment, isn't at this "regular" job, she is teaching sign language to beginners, starting a Sunday school, teaching herself to play the piano, or working as a receptionist at a golf club. This exuberant graduate of Seattle Central Community College's unique training program for interpreters appears determined, in one way or another, both to help the deaf and to lead an active personal life at the same time.

In their classes at Wilson, Lynn and Sue function as paraprofessionals in that ambiguous area between teacher and clerk, and yet fitting a strong and specific need. They and their peers—of whom there are very few in public schools—have done much to spur local efforts toward "mainstreaming" or placing deaf children in the "least restrictive" educational environment. They have mastered an exceptionally difficult craft, perhaps a profession, that demands intelligence, physical dexterity, and sensitivity.

Some free-lance or contract Ameslan interpreters, especially those who may interpret for television or commercial sponsors, may draw ten dollars per hour or even more. Mary Jo Billings, fresh out of SCCC's highly competitive two-year program, has remained at the college (where she earns $3.94 an hour for 19 hours a week), interpreting for 140 deaf students. At Wilson, Lynn Terwilleger and Sue Safioles are considered to be instructional aides and are on the wage scale of Seattle's regular paraprofessionals; their salary is approximately $8,100 for the school year.

If the wage span is flexible, the regimen of training that yields most of Seattle's freshly minted Ameslan interpreters is not. Housed in the 13-year-old Seattle Central Community College, it is a two-year, six-quarter curriculum that usually requires some previous experience in "signing," permits few electives, and accepts fewer than half of those who apply for admission. Like most other paraprofessional training programs, it requires aspirants with self-confidence, patience, and a compassionate, service-oriented nature. Unlike them, however, it also demands technical gifts and a special sense of the variety of ways in which people can communicate. Uniquely, too, within the extended family of paraprofessional categories the practitioner may acquire the basic skills needed to be an Ameslan interpreter without fully mastering the field. Even Coordinator Theresa Smith, an accomplished Ameslan teacher and interpreter, is still learning.

There is not one sign language, but several. Each, according to a *Washington Post* article of February 26, 1978, with "its fierce defenders." But whether it is Ameslan (also called ASL and, in the minds of many, really a foreign language), signed English, manual English, or variations of these, Theresa Smith's statement that the "field is taking off" cannot be seriously challenged.

"THE NEED WAS THERE"

The state law was a fact of life, and P.L. 94-142 was on the near horizon. My boss said "get going" and got me an expense account of $13. This was in August 1976, and we were beginning to see aides as a central factor in whatever the school system would be doing for handicapped children.

Vera Yager
Coordinator-Aide Trainer
Public Schools
Tucson, Arizona

Tucson, Arizona, is not the special education paraprofessional's nirvana. That distinction belongs to places like the school system of Framingham, Massachusetts or the Children's Psychiatric Center in Cincinnati, Ohio where salaries, working conditions, and perquisites are top of the line. In Tucson, aides in "adaptive education," the local label for special education, are on one of the less substantial wage scales in the business. They must pay most of the premiums for health insurance, and the system's offering of life insurance, a $2,500 policy per aide, is less than generous. Only rarely can the school district reimburse its aides for job-related course work at Pima Community College or the University of Arizona. There is almost no chance of advancement within the paraprofessional ranks or from them to the professional level.

These are the normal ingredients of an indifferent school system's attitude toward paraprofessionals. Usually, the combination spells poor morale, high turnover, and inadequate leadership. But in Tucson, these ingredients represent a beginning and a challenge—for the community, the paraprofessionals, and the indefatigable dynamo who is determined to make paraprofessional service to the city's 7,000 eligible children (out of a school population of 58,000) a model for the nation. If veteran social worker/human services professional Vera Yager has her way—which occurs in most of her bureaucratic encounters—Tucson will soon boast one of the country's strongest integrated programs for using aides sensibly in special or adaptive education in a large city's public schools.

When Tucson's Director of Special Education, Dr. Mary Meredith, asked Vera Yager in the summer of 1976 to design a comprehensive program for using aides in adaptive education, there was no literature, no record of experience, and only an imperfect collective sense of what aides could mean to a system. Yager came to her responsibilities, however, with a varied background in which she had seen nonprofessionals function superbly in drug treatment centers, in mental health, and with juvenile delinquents. The large-scale transition to education for handicapped children, she reckoned, would be hard work and she was right. Good news alternated with bad and mixed as the program developed.

The good:

- Many thousands of people live in Tucson for reasons of health (related to the climate) and there is a tradition of concern for people with health problems. Air Force families with handicapped children come to the large Davis-Monthan Air Base on compassionate transfer so that their children may attend Tucson's schools.
- The school board and community as a whole have historically supported adaptive education.
- The Tucson school hierarchy has decided that the state and federal laws on educating disabled children should be welcomed, not just minimally observed.

The bad:

- Prices are high and although the living standard is good, wages are low, a condition that has historically harmed paraprofessionals.
- The geographical area of the school district is too large for the kind of centralized control of paraprofessionals that a large new effort should have.
- For reasons imbedded in the social dynamics of Tucson's (and many other cities') school systems, esteem for aides has never been high.

The mixed:

- Although there was a readily available, highly qualified pool of potential aides for adaptive education (or for any respectable employment in sunny, over-populated Tucson), they saw little hope for professional reward and did not storm Vera Yager's door to apply.

But they finally did apply—college graduates housewives, activists—and an uncoordinated 40-person aide program in August 1976 became an integrated 272-person operation reaching into 75 public schools at a cost to the Tucson Public School budget of $900,000. Given free rein by Dr. Meredith and a benignly uninvolved but supportive higher-level administration, Yager "ran with the ball." Within the first few months of receiving the green light, she had personally interviewed and hired 150 new aides, drafted and published the system's "Teacher Aide Handbook," designed performance criteria for aides dealing with all of the handicapping conditions found in Tucson's schools, and conducted virtually nonstop orientation and in-service training sessions for the expanded corps of aides.

The ending in Tucson is not yet a happy one, despite the school system's redeemed pledge and Vera Yager's dedication. Though motivated as most of the 1977-78 school year's 242 aides appear to be, motivation neither pays the bills nor spurs professional advancement. To Yvonne Spence, a bilingual aide at the Roskruge School, it is degrading to leave work after a particularly satisfying day to return to a low standard of living. John Black, a knowledgeable environmentalist working as a paraprofessional at Fickett Junior High School and "enjoying every minute of it," nevertheless saw no way to remain in a field without dignity, adequate wages, or prospects for advancement. With some reluctance, he intends to complete degree requirements and chance the difficult job market for teachers.

In early 1978, Vera Yager was publicly plotting the obvious but difficult strategy of conducting system-wide negotiations leading to a better shake for Tucson's adaptive education aides. Half of the battle has been won; the city's schools have nearly as many special education aides as they can absorb. The real crunch will come when the system decides how deeply its commitment flows. Will it recognize its adaptive education aides as a distinct force meriting additional benefits, career advancement, increased salaries, more in-service training and, above all, more respect as a profession? Or will it content itself with the secure knowledge that the performance of the Meredith-Yager team has already stamped Tucson's as one of the nation's most aide-conscious school systems in the country? The result, at a time of precipitate expansion of the field, may have implications far beyond Arizona's borders.

"WE AND THE COMMUNITY ARE ONE"

Holly Center, the Eastern Shore Regional Mental Retardation Center in Salisbury, Maryland, houses between 190 and 200 residents ranging from two to 69 years of age. Approximately half of them are school age as defined by Public Law 94-142. One of the newest and best-equipped facilities of six such centers in Maryland, the six million dollar Center began operations in 1975 with jurisdiction for the nine mainly rural and resort counties of Maryland's Eastern Shore. Officials at Holly Center estimate that 80 percent of the residents are severely and profoundly handicapped; this figure will rise to 90 percent within seven years.

The setting of Holly Center, like that of many similar institutions throughout the country, is peaceful, almost bucolic. The low-lying buildings are agreeably situated on a flat field, on the edge of a city of 40,000 where the paramount virtues have always been hard work and pride of place. But Salisbury, the broiler capital of the East and a possible administrative headquarters for the off-shore oil industry which may revolutionize the Eastern Shore's economy, is, in the words of the *Washington Post*, the "conservative center of the ultra-conservative Eastern Shore." Slow to accept social change (the *Post* says, "in race relations especially, the habits of two centuries have been hard to break"), the city's leaders are otherwise both responsible and ambitious. They are also realists who viewed the newly arrived Holly Center as a source of jobs and prestige for their community.

They were right on both counts. The Center employs 325 persons, and all but a handful of specialists and administrators, who were not immediately available in Salisbury in any case, are from the metropolitan Salisbury area. Of these, roughly two-thirds (about 160) fall readily into the Center's main category of paraprofessionals called developmental parents, ten more are classroom teacher's aides, 40 work in the kitchens, and the remainder are professional specialists, technicians, administrators, and maintenance and custodial staff. Although Holly Center is not Salisbury's largest employer—that distinction belongs to A. W. Perdue and Son, the nationally famous chicken processor, with its 1,500 workers—its direct impact on the community is substantial.

As the main body of the direct care staff, Holly Center's developmental parents provide the hard core services that lead to growth and self-esteem for the residents. The vanguard of the institution's ties to the community, they work on three shifts around the clock. Their work is thankless, tedious, usually menial—and sometimes even rewarding. Brushing one's teeth, dressing oneself, or even combing one's hair are hardly distinctive achievements to most Americans, but to many of Holly Center's inhabitants, especially its school-age children, they represent progress of the highest order. Patience, tenacity, and understanding must be

Fortunately, there's no problem getting good aides and training them right here in Salisbury. This city wants to help, and we count our relationship with it as a real benefit in getting the job done. By getting involved both as aides and volunteers, a lot of people have come to understand something about handicapped people. This kind of support is important to us.

Dr. Philip Massey
Director, Holly Center
Salisbury, Maryland

present on both sides of the transaction, that of the resident and of the paraprofessional. When a frustrated and angry 21-year-old male patient punched aide Donna Lednum between the eyes, Donna had little choice but to continue working with him. But later, a six-year-old in Donna's care for three months called her by name for the first time. The emotional world of the aide can resemble a roller coaster.

To the job-needy residents of Salisbury and Wicomico County, Holly Center does not represent an automatically entered secure career. Although the pressures of working in a residential facility create substantial turnover, there is tough competition for available posts. Only 20 percent of the applicants for jobs as developmental parents make the grade, and a rigorous 18-week training program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act), weeds some of them out. But the positions carry salaries of $6,000 to $10,000, along with the cachet of a specialized career which, in the words of a Holly Center aide, "does something for someone" and makes a person "feel like a professional."

Training and schooling: Are they different, parallel, or identical? The question is a difficult one in the best of educational worlds. At a residential center where severely and profoundly handicapped children live and learn, distinctions are blurred. At the least, the school classroom offers the child the prospect of change, or different voices, of new experiences, even when, by non-institutional standards, the learning is substantively sub-marginal. Ideally, it can uncover suppressed gifts or liberate repressed souls. Here again, at Holly Center, where there are ten teachers and ten teacher aides, the paraprofessional plays a critical part.

To Donna Lednum, who has been both developmental parent and instructional aide, it is a fact of life that instruction of Holly Center's school children would be impossible without the one-to-one relationship the presence of an aide makes possible. At a given mid-morning moment, a typical classroom might present a tableau of ten children of all ages working with a teacher, aide, physical therapist, speech (or other) specialist, and foster grandparent. It would not be unusual, either, to see senior staffers like Peter Yanker or John Marcheski on the scene. But throughout the class two people are always there, teacher and aide. At Holly Center that aide is many things: paraprofessional teaching assistant, cottage parent, guide, monitor, and above all, friend. And (s)he is one of the Center's best bridges to Salisbury. To quote one of Holly Center's top officials, "we and the community are one."

"GOING FIRST CLASS PAYS OFF"

The Children's Psychiatric Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, holds a rich legacy. When it began in 1920 as the Psychopathic Institute of the Jewish Hospital it was "the first medically based, residential center or diagnostic study home for emotionally disturbed children in this country." There was little practical distinction then in the minds of the therapists and analysts between the treatment of adults and children, and the facility represented an important early step in getting at the problems of grade school children with severe emotional, behavioral, and learning disabilities. By 1955, the Center (also called the Child Guidance Home) had taken the first tentative steps toward offering regular classroom instruction to its young residents. By the mid-1970s, the Center's small but admirably equipped school had become the central focus of life for its 16 residents and 50 day patients.

The free-standing ungraded school within the CPC has seven teachers, all with graduate degrees in special education. Without an equal number of aides, says Edward J. Requardt, the Center's Director of Special Education (and *de facto* principal of the school), the school could not have expanded to its present size. The children must have the frequent, in some cases constant, attention of a trained adult, and even the teacher-aide combination, augmented by various in-house and visiting specialists, does not always suffice. Although there is no guarantee of enough permanent resources to support all of the Center, funding from state, city, county, university, and charitable sources enables CPC to maintain these ratios and combinations at steady levels.

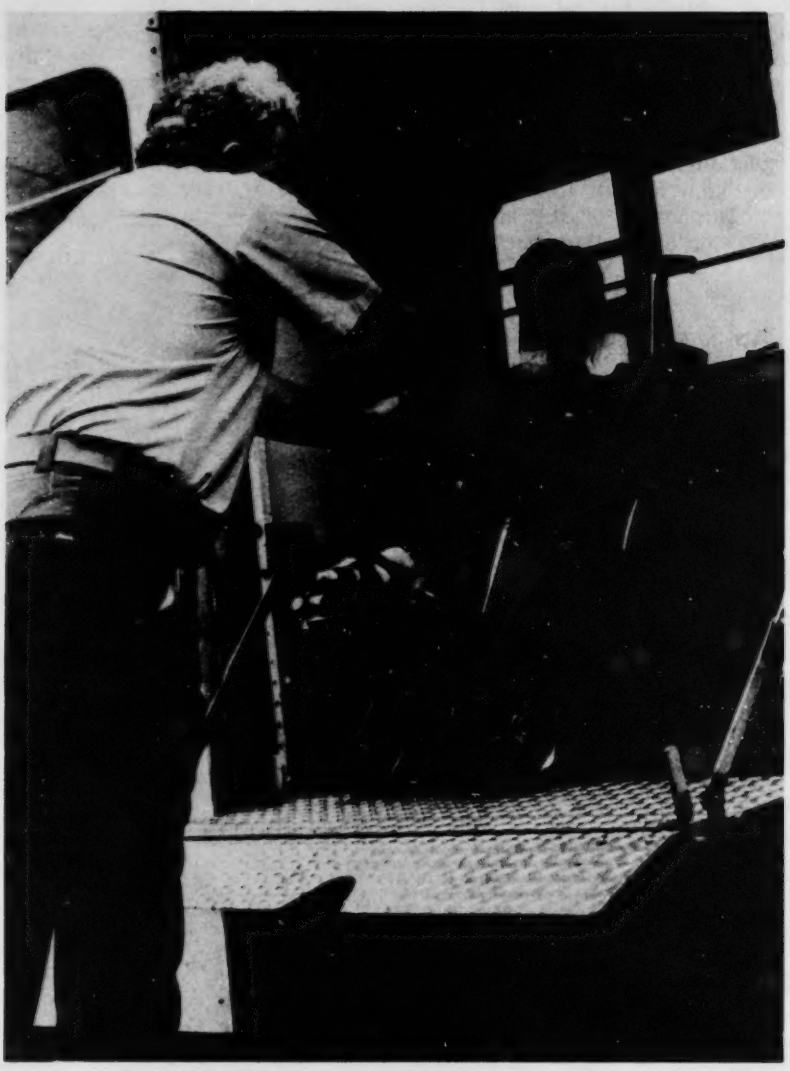
In Cincinnati's educational circles, the situation of the paraprofessional at the Children's Psychiatric Center is unique. Envied, if warily, by the city's other educational aides, the Center's aides can earn as much as many teachers in the local school systems. They tend to stay five years or more, have their own offices, and enjoy virtually all of the perquisites of their professional teaching colleagues. Beyond these amenities, there is also the satisfaction of working in a thoroughly professional and caring environment. The self-starting teacher's aide, like Mary Ann Brown, for example, can even put creative talents to work. A high-energy veteran aide, Mary Ann discerned a need for a supplementary reading program at the Center and proceeded to establish one, complete with tutoring arrangements, a laboratory, and referrals from teachers.

Small wonder that the Center attracted Paraprofessional Richard Futimachi, who holds a bachelor of arts in psychology from the University of Cincinnati. A three-year aide specializing in "crisis intervention," Futimachi works at various times with 20 children in the six to 12 age bracket. His principal contact with them comes when "they're acting out, have perhaps gotten out of control, and need some form of discipline."

What attracted Futimachi to this professionally stimulating and psychologically (if not financially) rewarding field? "My own case," says Futimachi, "is probably not typical, but it is revealing. I've always had a strong personal interest in kids with problems and worked with many before coming here. I happen to believe that men can and should take more of a role in child care. Many boys, in particular, just don't have a male model to emulate. My own family situation, no children and a wife with a good executive job, also makes it easier for me than for a typical male peer who'd have tremendous

Our assumption is that the paraprofessionals are at the center of all of our instructional activity. If we sometimes appear to overwork them, we do at least try to reward them—monetarily, with special perquisites, and with as much job satisfaction as this work can offer. We not only don't lack for applicants; we often have far too many.

Edward J. Requardt
Director of Special Education
Children's Psychiatric Center
Cincinnati, Ohio



Carl Sulit

problems supporting a young family with a non-working wife on what this field, even here at the Center, can pay.

"With more and better focused publicity, the message can get across that paraprofessional work can provide a good entry into other fields in mental health or, for example, as head of a residential program. Above all, the field has to be viewed across the board as a respectable and responsible position. Sure there can be menial work, but that shouldn't be the name of the game. It's up to the supervisors, especially the teacher and principals, to protect the aide from being dumped on or turned into a 'go-fer'. This is a field for people with an instinct for service. We should cultivate that."

In a more conventional setting—a junior high school in Tucson, Arizona—John Black echoes many of the same sentiments. Happy with his work but predictably less so with the lack of professional recognition that accompanies it, Black states: "The image of the aide as a housewife picking up a few extra bucks is still what people think of. Related to that is the perception of the kids. At the elementary level, they consider an aide, any adult, to be a teacher. But in junior high school, where I work, they understand the difference and, if no one explains the real role of an aide, they treat us with much less respect. These are subtle points, I know, but they make a difference, especially to someone who feels that his work matters."

The issue of professional self-respect and holding an assured and esteemed place in the educational system is of central importance to paraprofessionals. Only rarely in mid-1978 did they view their role as commanding respect outside of their profession. Across the nation, they enjoyed an astonishingly high degree of inner satisfaction but, unsurprisingly and all too accurately, they perceived that it would be a long, hard fight to achieve equal professional status. One of the rare exceptions to this is the Children's Psychiatric Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Samuel James

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"THE DIFFERENCE IS TRAINING"

The Bastin Home in rural Williamsburg, Ohio, is a medium-sized house that is home for 13 children with severe behavioral and physical disabilities including deafness, cerebral palsy, autism, and retarded growth. All are mobile, although only marginally so in several cases. Two are technically qualified to attend public school classes for the "educable" mentally retarded (50-65 I.Q. range); the other 11 are considered "trainable." All were referred to the Bastin Home by Ohio state agencies which had judged them incapable, for various reasons, of functioning adequately either at home or in state institutions.

The children live with the Bastin family seven days a week. Parents may visit once a month, and most children go home at Christmas and on a few other holidays. The state pays $14.11 per day for the housing, care, food, clothing, and education of each child.

When Mrs. Iola Bastin transformed the family house into a foster home for welfare teenagers in 1970, her daughter Deborah was 12 years old. Four years later, the Bastins had switched to children with behavioral problems, and 16-year-old Debbie, a high school junior, found herself deeply involved in their lives.

Brought up "to respect the mentally retarded and physically handicapped," Debbie made an early commitment to working with them. An exceptionally intelligent and competent young woman, she decided in her senior year in high school that to work effectively would require a many-sided regimen of practical training, an academic background, and exposure to the larger world of social and human services.

The opportunity was "just down the road a piece" in the impressive two-year REACH (Reaching, Educating, Aiding Children with Handicaps) Program at the new nearby Clermont Center of the University of Cincinnati in Batavia, Ohio. Conceived and directed by Dr. Sandra Small with funding from the U.S. Office of Education's Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, REACH involved Debbie Bastin in a time-devouring ordeal that she calls "the education of a lifetime." By the time she completed REACH in 1977 to become one of the program's first six graduates, Debbie had worked her way through a full academic course load and seven lengthy "practica" (which are full-time on-the-job training experiences.)

We really put our students through a rigorous experience. When our graduates leave this competency-based program, they've accumulated 700 hours of practical experience. They have learned to work intelligently and creatively across regular disciplinary lines. They can do many of the things social workers, teachers, and psychologists do. They don't have much trouble getting satisfying jobs.

Sandra H. Small
Director, REACH Program
Clermont General and
Technical College
Batavia, Ohio

Among others, she worked in a public school for the orthopedically handicapped, a summer remedial reading program, a day camp for withdrawn (autistic-like) children, and an infant home. She was a tutor, a tester, and a regular instructional aide. And at the end of the day she went home to some of her favorite people: the residents of Bastin Home.

Debbie Bastin's case may be unique, but so is Debbie. A full-fledged, state-licensed operator of a group home at the age of 20, she shares the management of Bastin Home with her mother who frankly admits, "Debbie can do it all. The difference is training. Now she teaches me, too." Her capacity for work is enormous and her growing abilities in many fields attest both to her capacity to learn and to the training she has undergone. A typical day in Debbie Bastin's life defies description. She teaches, individually and in groups. She hauls "her" children to treatment centers, diagnostic clinics (where her training enables her to take issue, if necessary, with her new peers), to Sunday school, on shopping outings, to playgrounds, shows, and sporting events. She keeps many types of records—admission, psychological, medical, dental, behavioral change, and seemingly countless others—to chart the lives of children whom the state has consigned to the oblivion of institutions. Debbie refuses to believe that such consignment must happen and hopes that it won't.

The records tell only part of the story. There are less quantifiable successes: a 12-year-old boy who couldn't talk when he arrived three years earlier and now is attending school every day; a 10-year-old girl who couldn't walk, talk, or, important in the Bastin world, laugh, and who learned to do all three; a boy who learned to stay seated. Then there are the once-hostile children who now enjoy sitting on Debbie's and her mother's laps every chance they get.

The Bastins own "a little land around the place and across the road." One day in the near future, perhaps by some time in 1979, there will be a second Bastin Home for 13 profoundly needy, emotionally retarded children. Its owner-operator, and principal professional resource will be a trained and compassionate 21 or 22 year-old expert named Deborah Bastin.

In Alachua County in northern Florida, Carolyn Lichtman, also 20, is a full-time paraprofessional aide at the Westwood Middle

School. Like Debbie Bastin, Carolyn is a graduate of a two-year program—in her case the Career Associate in Special Education (CASE) Program at Santa Fe Community Collge in Gainesville. She has always wanted to work with handicapped children, especially those with hearing difficulties. That opportunity recently came to her, and with the training she received in her CASE years, she was ready for it.

Carolyn has chosen the path of the classroom and the mildly retarded rather than the separate or institutional facility. She found the CASE training—a no-nonsense blend of roughly three-fourths practice or "how-to" course work and one quarter theory and/or general liberal arts-type exposure—to be both useful and tantalizing. It prepared her for a large variety of instructional services for a self-contained classroom of handicapped children who spend various parts of their days "mainstreamed" in "normal" classrooms at the 600-student Westwood School, and her appetite for more training. Carolyn would like to complete a B.S. degree in special education at the University of South Florida and, eventually, a master's degree at the University of Florida. The procession is not an unusual one; some 5,000 teacher's aides in a single federal program, the Career Opportunities Program, took the same step, although not in special education, in the early and mid-1970s. Training and a lot of personal motivation made the difference.

Both Carolyn and her classroom teacher, a former aide named, Mary Farrah, agree that the move to teacher status implies a huge lateral and upward leap. The capacity of an already trained individual to make that jump often hinges on his or her receptivity to two factors: satisfaction, or lack of it, with the job of teacher aide, and the quality of training already received. In a curious, almost unchartable way, good training creates new expectations. For good training is what Carolyn Lichtman received from CASE, but it raised important questions and created different aspirations for her. Fully aware of her current limitations ("I'm not ready to be a teacher yet, but I know I could handle it with more training."), she watches and learns from Farrah as she plans the week's work, administers discipline, prepares grades, deals with the principal and parents, and keeps a diverse student body (the children of the University of Florida faculty and about 300 inner city Black children, bussed daily to Westwood) relaxed, learning, and harmonious.

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All systems are "go" in Kansas, where legal authority (House Bill No. 162, K.S.A. 1976 Supplement 72-962) and the creative persistence of Phyllis Kelly, Coordinator of Special Education Paraprofessionals, State Department of Education have combined to enshrine the Sunflower State in the paraprofessional's mythical Hall of Fame. It may take a decade for most of the other 49 states to catch up. Note the following features of the Kansas system:

- The Kansas legislature has decreed that the category of "special teacher" includes "a paraprofessional qualified to assist certified teachers in the instruction of exceptional children as determined by standards established by the state board and who is so approved by the state board." This constitutes the strongest political affirmation the educational paraprofessional in America has ever received.
- From a known total of 40 special education paraprofessionals in the 1969-70 school year, the population has leaped to approximately 1,100 in seven years. While the jump is large, it is not unusual. What is unusual is that superlative documentation has been kept which permits individual analysis of this increase.
- In setting standards for the state's contribution to the salaries of "special teachers," K.S.A. 72-978 calls for paraprofessionals to be counted as one-half of a "full-time equivalent special teacher." The practical effect is that, in school year 1977-78, the state was footing $4,500 of a teacher's salary and $2,250 of an aide's. The level of this direct and substantial contribution is unique in the nation.
- The Kansas State Department of Education has created a state-wide training program based on what it calls the facilitators' model (a "training of trainers" design) which has instructed officials in all of the state's ten major geographical districts and in almost every school jurisdiction within them while building a strong supporting network and an intelligent state-wide awareness of the virtues (and the shortcomings) of the educational paraprofessionals. The training is regular, cumulative, and welcomed.
- Standards for training, approving, and employing paraprofessionals have been set by the state. Gaining respect

"THERE MUST BE POLITICAL SUPPORT"

We're showing that our state government cares about the paraprofessionals who work with handicapped children. By offering the training and network-building we do, we've helped them and their field to gain genuine respect. Above all, of course, we want to give disabled children the best possible education. But not far behind that priority is another one: enhancing the capabilities of the dedicated paraprofessionals who work with the teacher to assist these children to learn.

Phyllis M. Kelly
Coordinator of Special Education
Paraprofessionals
State Department of Education
Topeka, Kansas

> throughout the state, they are precise without being prescriptive and support rather than inhibit local school systems.

The Kansas system leaves little to chance and, some say, not much to the local school districts. The State Department of Education calls the paraprofessional a "team member who works alongside the special education teacher. He/she not only frees the teacher from the more routine tasks of the classroom, but also serves as an effective part of the educational team. With differentiated responsibilities, he/she carries out the programs developed by the special education teachers." Describing the utilization of paraprofessionals, the State Plan for Fiscal Year 1978 states exactly what it perceives to be the will of the people as expressed through the laws passed by their elected legislature. These laws are not vague rhetoric in Kansas. Their interpretation by the State Department of Education, as approved by the State Board and Governor, is unambiguous, as these quotations from the State Plan richly demonstrate:

> The special education paraprofessional has become an essential person in the expansion of programs for students with special needs. Exceptional children and youth require smaller classes; therefore, more personnel are needed. In addition, more and more pupils are being admitted to public school programs who before were in institutional settings or receiving no educational services at all. The paraprofessional can help overcome these obstacles and work towards the quality education that is necessary for exceptional students.

Focusing on how schools are to use—and not use—paraprofessionals, the State Plan says:

> In order to use a paraprofessional effectively, it is necessary that the teacher first have a clear vision of his/her own role as a teacher. He/she needs to understand the hierarchy of the instructional tasks, and then decide which ones best involve his/her time and which ones should be delegated to his/her assistant. The amount and quality of professional supervision given is crucial in deciding what duties paraprofessionals can and should perform. There is almost universal agreement that the diagnosis of educational needs and the planning and design of programs and procedures to meet those needs is a professional function. The role of the paraprofessional is to provide support to

the approved special education personnel in the educational program, management of students, and assistance with non-instructional tasks.

In situations where students are being mainstreamed into regular class programs, the paraprofessional may assist the teacher to facilitate the mainstreaming process. At times, when the teacher is working with the exceptional pupil(s), the paraprofessional may work with the class in a group activity. The paraprofessional shall not be utilized in activities which do not relate to the acceptance and education of exceptional student(s) into that particular classroom.

These statements could probably be improved. So could the Bill of Rights or a Hemingway short story. As they stand, the Kansas State Plan dicta are a near-model of clear expression and of well-organized concern for disabled children. They may not lend themselves to exact duplication in more than a few states, but there is no state that could not use them as well as the training designs and guidelines (for dealing with some 65 handicaps), that the special education paraprofessionals in Kansas observe in their daily work.

The developments in Kansas have depended on numerous interrelated factors and features. Some, which appear to be generalizable, are readily adaptable. They constitute a crude, unplanned, but valid scenario for action. This sampling, drawn entirely from the Kansas experience, would be a good start for other states:

1. *Take a hard but open-ended look at the federal and state legislature.* It is generally accepted that legislation has provided the education of handicapped children with the acceptance it has long merited. It is equally true, however, that there has been little intelligent structuring of instructional resources to carry out the new laws. The case for paraprofessionals is powerful; make sure that it does not get lost in the rush. Paraprofessionals can and should be an important feature of the implementation of any legislation that concerns the teaching of disabled children.

2. *Mobilize political support and target it sensibly.* The remarkable achievement of the Kansas legislature was not an accident but the culmination of a many-sided drive to assure aides a prominent place in the state law and, later, the plan. Legislators, the State Department of Education (Special Education Chief James Marshall, in particular), the Kansas Association for Retarded Citizens, and various others were hard and effective fighters.

3. *Appoint a strong, creative administrator to implement the law.* Kansas's State Coordinator Phyllis Kelly does much to give paraprofessionalism the credibility it enjoys there. A relatively junior official in her department, she could have made a successful run at a statewide political office; she knows the state, particularly its special education-concerned population. With due respect to her huge talents and energy, there are others like her elsewhere in the United States. But hers is not a job for a time-serving functionary. It requires drive, sacrifice, and commitment.

4. *Get networks going, both to decentralize authority and create a sense of ownership.* The Kansas model, with "agents" dotting the state, does this on

two levels: the paraprofessional who meets and shares experience with peers in training sessions, and the 52 "facilitators" who deal regularly with both the state (a prestige-enhancing relationship) and the aides.

5. *Enlist outside professional assistance.* The regular "training" sessions Ms. Kelly oversees are sprinkled with experts drawn from all over the country. The meetings quickly established themselves as high-quality, low-cost affairs which cast the State Department of Education in a favorable light, brought the relatively new field's best people to Kansas (from as far afield as New York, Maryland, and Arizona for an April 1978 training session in Hutchinson, Kansas, for example) and contributed to the aides' and facilitators' professional self-esteem.

6. *Make sure there's a first-class model in your own back yard.* The Kansas State Department of Education didn't create the city of Topeka's model, John Ganger did. But it is an almost perfect prototype of what the legislature and State Department are driving at, and its location, in the medium-sized (128,000-person) capital city, is convenient for all. An active member of the Facilitators' Network, Ganger runs a paraprofessional unit of the Topeka school system that, statistically at least, mirrors what has happened throughout Kansas in the 1970s. In 1971, Topeka's schools had three paid paraprofessionals in special education; six years later there were 95. In the 1974-75 school year, the budget for aides was $58,000; three years later it reached $193,000 (from several sources). The entire Topeka school district had $275,000 for special education in 1967; ten years later, $3.5-plus million and when 33 job vacancies appeared in 1978, there were 270 applicants for paraprofessional jobs.

Like Phyllis Kelly, John Ganger knows his district and his field. He predicts certification of paraprofessionals in Kansas within three years, although State Special Education Chief Marshall muses that "generic" certification of aides in one or more of special education's 65 fields could lock people in by creating overspecialized enclaves. Ganger wants the state to take the lead in creating genuine career ladders but recognizes that presently unmeetable prerequisites of salary and working conditions could complicate that issue.

Something of a philosopher in a field known for a heavy prevalence of doers over thinkers, Ganger worries about the tasks ahead, even in a progressive state like Kansas. The field must create its own literature which is now thin and not yet entirely credible. The issue of union affiliation looms. In Kansas the state's National Education Association unit keeps a watching brief. And, despite massive strides, parents, the linchpin of the long-term success or failure of the movement, still need persuasion that paraprofessionals can work with their children. Finally, Ganger laments the inconsistency and unevenness of in-service training for aides. Having attained a once unimaginably large paraprofessional population, Topeka, like so many other jurisdictions, finds its money going into salaries and limited fringe benefits for the aides, while training takes a back seat. Federal money arrives occasionally and unpredictably. It is accepted gratefully but skeptically, for it doesn't last, and the patterns of a year or two of relative affluence are not easily discarded.

Carl Sulit

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Carl Sulit

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"DON'T TAKE US FOR GRANTED"

We don't pretend to be certified teachers responsible for the children in a classroom, but we aren't clerks, either. We love these kids and receive little recognition—and almost no possibility of career advancement—for our work with them. I suspect that our contribution would mean even more if we could enjoy greater material and psychological satisfaction.

Any Instructional Aide
Anywhere in America

The American educational paraprofessional does not underestimate the vital role (s)he plays in working with the disabled child. If the cases and situations we have described—from Massachusetts to California and from Washington to Florida—have any validity, then the field does, indeed, need the focused attention of education's policy-makers. Take, for example, the question of status.

The galaxy of titles that paraprofessionals in special education bear can be misleading. So can the often carefully differentiated treatment that the various categories receive. Accurate and descriptive though most of them are (some are also pretentious), they convey a picture of high potential mobility for individual aides. It should be a short, even upward, step, for example, from one paraprofessional classification to another. But it isn't. Only rarely do paraprofessional aides switch from one disabled or age group to another. And with the occasional exception of a small private school or a big city school system—ironically seldom at levels in between—there are few opportunities for advancement, either within the paraprofessional ranks or from aide to teacher or other professional specialties.

The concept of a career ladder or lattice has achieved some recognition in the world of educational paraprofessionalism. Among non-specialized or "regular" paraprofessionals, especially those from low-income areas, the notion has drawn heavy attention since the early and mid-1960s, when the "new careers" movement began. The idea that home-grown paraprofessionals could better serve their communities and advance within their new careers even gained Congressional legitimacy in 1966 through the Nelson-Scheuer Amendment to the Equal Opportunity Act of 1964. Despite the Nelson-Scheuer call for assurance of maximum prospects for advancement, ladders and lattices have remained more concept than reality. For every area that has successfully installed them—Minneapolis provides a superb example—there are far too many aborted or non-starting cases. In many communities or institutional

settings, moreover, the paraprofessional has not fought for advancement, has few supporters in influential places, and does not wish to assume a threatening role vis-a-vis the credentialed teacher. Nonetheless, spectacular growth is taking place, as the requirements of national and state legislation and the rapid expansion of training programs attest.

Whether the programs can—or should—produce "all-purpose" aides for special education is an issue destined to bedevil trainers and educational policy-makers. Can the graduate of a two-year community college program be expected to possess several aide-level competencies —mastery of sign language, physical therapy, speech technology, and/or special skills in early childhood, for example—or should one main competency suffice? Is mobility among these and others such as psychiatric aides or specialists in aberrant adolescent behavior even advisable? The answer is probably not in most cases but possibly in others. Certainly there are clusters of paraprofessional-level skills and special competencies that possess built-in interchangeability. But it is of questionable personal satisfaction for an aide working with deaf children at $3.20 per hour to move across the hall to a class of severely and profoundly handicapped children—or to move the other way for the same $3.20 with no additional training, and with almost no hope of personal advancement.

There is no typical institution employing aides in special education. No two sets of paraprofessionals possess the same values and ambitions and there are few consistent attitudes about professional self-improvement. It would be impossible (or prohibitively costly) to tally how many aides view themselves as future teachers. Most, it is safe to say, do not; if their role as aides is not the path to certain riches, it is at least a source, for most, of deep psychological satisfaction.

But psychological satisfaction neither pays bills nor represents professional fulfillment. The federally-funded Career Opportunities Program (1970-1975) demonstrated at 132 places around the country that indigenous paraprofessionals could, with a combination of academic courses and practical experience, move into the professional teaching ranks (over 5,000 altogether). And in Framingham, Massachusetts, Roger Brown, later to become Associate Commissioner for Special Education for that state, hired fully trained and certified special

education teachers as aides at salaries of $5 to $8 per hour. Then, as teaching vacancies occurred, the aides moved into them.

In an ideal world, according to Principal Margaret W. Stortz of the 64-student Chimes School in Baltimore, Maryland, the instructional aide should receive more general respect as an unsung hero(ine) in educating handicapped children. More precisely, (s)he should be recognized as the single person in almost any instructional system who spends the most time with the handicapped child. For this paramount reason, says Stortz, who began her career in special education as an aide, the hiring of a paraprofessional is a critically important action. Echoing the astonishingly unanimous view of special educators, a notoriously independent-minded group, throughout the country, Principal Stortz contends that, while some prior training is highly desirable and will be even more so as laws become more prescriptive, certain individual traits are equally necessary. Her irreducible list: respect for all children, a basic understanding of their needs, willingness to work, readiness to become a member of a team, and enthusiasm to learn. With these, attests Ms. Stortz, an aide can master the work.

In 1980, when P.L. 94-142 and the various state laws are being fully implemented, the role of the paraprofessional in the education of handicapped children will probably be neither more nor less clear than now. Paraprofessionals will have an image of uneven professional attitudes combined with uncertainty, even suspicion, by the public. Predictably, paraprofessionals already accessible will be even more reachable. There will be plenty of jobs, new opportunities for training, and a growing need to arrive at commonly held definitions concerning qualifications, professional levels, instructional roles, and a host of others. Let little doubt exist on this point: Only the teacher, and often not (s)he, spends more instructional time with the handicapped child than the paraprofessional. It is a national imperative that the paraprofessional be a qualified, concerned, and responsible educator.

This is how it is with the paraprofessionals who work with handicapped children. They are concerned—about the children they teach and love, about a society that has only recently demonstrated that it cares, and about the quality of their own lives and work.

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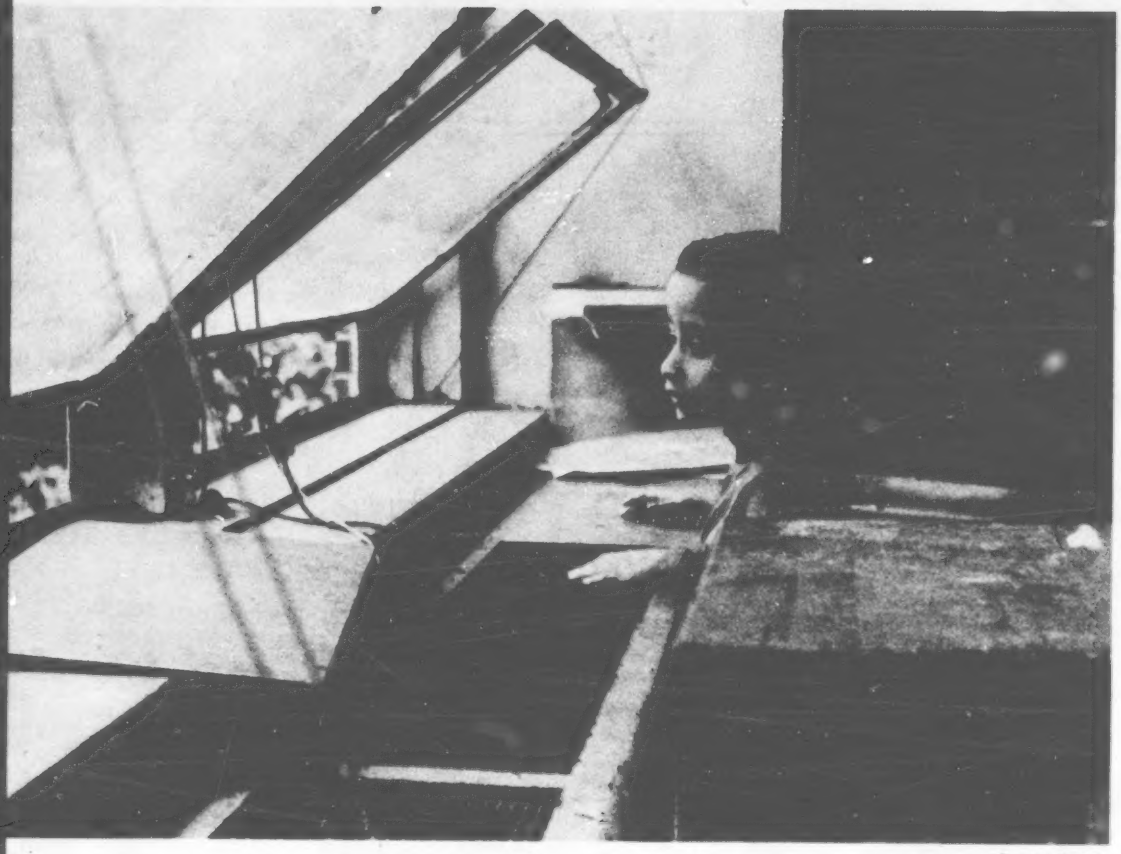

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